Such subtleties, however, deceived nobody. The result was to expose the crimes and evils of Tsarism. The Duma greeted the ministers with catcalls: "Murderers! Hangmen! Butchers! Resign!" This is how the First Duma acquired its historical name, the "Duma of Wrath."

There was a short period when it looked as though the Duma would become the rallying point for progressive forces. But the revolutionaries distrusted the Cadets, and the Cadets wished no alliance with the revolution. The deep split between the Cadets and the Laborites came into the open in the discussion of agrarian reform. The Cadets introduced a bill designed to reduce the scope of tenure and to transfer a large part of the privately owned land to the peasants, with fair recompense to landowners. The Labor Group submitted a bill based on the idea of collective ownership of land and its periodic redistribution within the community.

Reactionary circles met both projects with rage. Perhaps their indignation against the Cadet bill was particularly strong. They denounced it as an attempt to destroy the landowning nobility, the strongest support of the throne.[2]

The decisive clash between the Cadets and the Laborites did not come on the matter of agrarian reform, however, but on the question of tactics. The Labor Group demanded election of agrarian committees to assess land needs and resources in each department, county, and precinct; such committees, it believed, would insure the people's participation in solving the land problem. The Cadets, however, barred discussion of this plan. This was the turning point. From that day on, the Duma began to lose ground.

The Labor Group of the First Duma had no brilliant leaders, but it represented the majority of the Russian people and knew what they were after: more land for the peasants, more education for their children, freedom from greedy landowners and rapacious policemen. The members of the Group knew also that the Tsar and the government sided with the landowners against the peasants and with the rich against the poor. And this was about all they knew of politics.

THE S-D GROUP IN THE DUMA

The emergence of the workers' S-D group in the Duma strengthened its left wing but at the same time provoked violent attacks against the Duma from the right.

[2] The author of the Cadet bill, the brilliant and scholarly banker Herzenstein, was later assassinated by the Black Hundreds.

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